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General Comment

I am blind and tried to vote absentee ballot in Connecticut for the Presidential election in 2020. The Secretary of State and Attorney General were extremely resistant to helping us at all. It took legal pressure from the national office of the National Federation of the Blind to have them finally agree to come up with some kind of accessible pdf. Rather than accepting the NFB's help they decided to come up with a form of their own. This form ended up being difficult to fill. Using a talking software program called JAWS, it took quite an effort to fill out, having to continuously back up and go forward to find the boxes you needed to check. Once you filled out the ballot it had to be printed. I have a printer, but many blind people do not. At this point the inside envelope had to be signed. It is impossible to know where to sign when you are blind. All in all fillable pdf's are not accessible. I would also like to say before I filled out my ballot I tried using my iPhone and iPad. With both of these devices the pdf was impossible to fill in. Voice Over, the audible reading used by the blind would skip right over the portion where you had to fill in your address. You could not get past this portion of the ballot. Many blind people use smart devices because they cannot afford a computer and then another \$1,000.00 for the talking software. Connecticut was a total failure in providing an equal access to a private and independent vote for the blind and print disabled. We were fought during the entire process by our Secretary of State, Denise Merrill. She is still fighting us by blocking any language that new bills have to give us true equal access to voting that our sighted peers have. Thank you. Maryanne Melley

Attachments

Secretary of State Email Shannon Wegele

Secretary of State Letter